

28 January 2011

European art of 19th-20th centuries in spotlight as one of Museum's major galleries reopens

Gallery I: reopens to public 1 February 2011

This spring, visitors to the Fitzwilliam will have the opportunity to experience one of the Museum's most popular collections in a new light, as Gallery I reopens to the public.

Located in the original Founder's Building of the Museum, adjacent to the grand entrance hall, Gallery I presents paintings, sculpture, manuscripts and decorative arts produced in Europe between 1890 and 1940. The space has been transformed by a year-long refurbishment, during which time it has been closed to visitors.

The newly-reopened gallery will enable the public to rediscover this fine collection - with a redesigned arrangement of artworks - in very different surroundings. The 2010-11 refurbishment has involved major restoration of this Grade I-listed building's fabric, notably to the glass domes above and *scagliola* (richly-coloured imitation marble inlay) columns. The gallery walls have also been transformed from their previous light hue to a darker shade, creating an atmospheric space in which visitors can experience the collections.

Highlights of the displays include:

- Paintings by the 'Camden Town' group of artists: Walter Sickert, Spencer Gore and Harold Gilman
- French painting of the period by artists such as Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard, from landscapes to intimate interior scenes
- Work by Slade School alumni Augustus John, William Nicholson and William Orpen, including Nicholson's enigmatic *Girl With a Tattered Glove*
- A group of Stanley Spencer's most controversial paintings, including the striking *Love Among the Nations*
- Sculpture by Auguste Rodin and Jacob Epstein



William Orpen (1887-1931), *Self-Portrait*, 1924

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Trumpington Street
Cambridge CB2 1RB
England

01223 332900
www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

Press enquiries: email
fitzmuseum-press@lists.cam.ac.uk

This redisplay of familiar works will also introduce visitors to the unfamiliar web of connections linking many of the artists, subjects and writers on show. These associations ranged from the artistic to the personal, such as Rodin's relationship with his model and muse Gwen John, whose brother Augustus enjoyed an uneasy alliance with Jacob Epstein. The arrangement of the gallery will also show how several British artists were inspired by their French counterparts; many trained and exhibited there, or - like Sickert and Gwen John - lived there for an extended period of their lives.

The gallery's most striking feature - the three roof domes which have filled the space with natural light since the 19th century - also presented the Museum's conservation team with its greatest challenge: meeting the conservation needs of fragile artworks whilst optimising natural light in the gallery. Working with experts from the University of Cambridge's Architecture Department, the Fitzwilliam developed a method of applying a special screening material to these domes, reducing any harmful light without affecting the appearance of the domes or the quality of the illumination.

"Gallery I is the latest in an on-going series of reinstallations of the Fitzwilliam's collections that allow us to bring new works on display and provide updated and expanded information," says Fitzwilliam Director Dr. Timothy Potts. "The British and continental works in this installation, generously funded by Daniel Katz Limited, have been selected to highlight the relationships between artists and 'schools,' providing fresh insights into some familiar works and giving new prominence to others. With new wall fabric and refurbished *scagliola* and plasterwork, the gallery has never looked better."

The reopening will be accompanied by a diverse programme of free 'Insights' events, allowing visitors to discover more about the artists featured, their lives and creative outputs. A series of discussions are complemented by a programme of Special Displays, which give the public the chance to view drawings, watercolours and prints not normally on display, up-close and in the relaxed surroundings of the Museum's Study Room. Full details are available at www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk.

- ENDS / ... Notes for Editors -

Details for publication:

Gallery I: 19th-20th Century British and European Art

Reopens to public | February 2011

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00

Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 - 17.00

ADMISSION FREE

Further information and images:

The Marketing and Press Office

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

Telephone: +44 (0)1223 332941/332900; FAX: +44 (0)1223 332923

Email: fitzmuseum-press@lists.cam.ac.uk

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Cambridge CB2 1RB
England

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Notes for Editors

The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints. The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins. The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 300,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00. Free admission. www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk

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